

Spain

“Quien dice España, dice todo”. He who says Spain says everything.

Spain has been influenced by varying peoples and cultures for thousands of years. Civilization on the *Iberian Peninsula* has been recorded as far back as 2000 B.C. and man has had a presence there for more than 200,000 years. Rome started influencing what is present day Spain around 218 B.C. and had control of the entire peninsula by the time of the birth of Jesus Christ. After the Roman Empire fell, Spain was ruled by various tribes over the centuries. The Germanic tribes known as the Visigoths invaded in the 5th century. The Muslim Moors invaded from North Africa in 711. As the Moorish influence moved inland, Christians began to fight the Muslim Empire. The marriage of *Isabel of Castile* and *Ferdinand of Aragon* in 1469 helped to unite the country in its fight and the Moors were finally defeated in 1492 when Granada was captured by the united thrones of Castile and Aragon.

At the same time that Spain was unifying under a Christian King and Queen, Christopher Columbus was making his discovery of America and changing Spain's course in history. His discovery marked the beginning of Spain's Golden Age. The country became the most powerful nation in the Old World with the wealth it gained from the Americas. But it did not last.

By the end of the 18th century Spain was involved in so many inner conflicts among her

regions and wars with other countries that there was not enough wealth coming in from the New World to cover all the losses. In 1808, the forces of Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Spain and Napoleon's brother was placed on the throne, forcing King Carlos IV to abdicate. Although Spain forced the French out a few years later in 1814, they had lost their control on the colonies and most would gain independence in the next 30 years. The lowest point came at the end of the 19th century when Spain lost its last colonies (Puerto Rico and Cuba) in the Spanish-American War.

The 20th century did not start out much better. The country was neutral in World War I, but fought a 20 year skirmish in Morocco trying to help France set up a government. The people of Spain tired of the fighting and called for a new republic. The Second Republic was formed in 1931, but instead of reforming the system of government, the fight for political control of the country threw Spain into a bloody Civil War. In 1939 *Generalissimo Francisco Franco* was appointed head of State and ruled as a dictator until his death in 1975. Prince *Juan Carlos I* ascended the throne of Spain after Franco's death to become king and instituted a democratic constitutional monarchy that insured him popular support for the rest of his reign.

Spain has not been trouble free since the death of Franco. There have been increasing terrorist attacks by the ETA, or Basque Separatist Movement, in order to try and force the government to recognize the autonomy of the Basque Country.

Other regions such as Catalonia are also seeking regional self rule. The highlight for Spain in the last few years was the combination of having the Summer Olympics in Barcelona, the Worlds Fair in Seville and the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, all in one year, 1992.